DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 458 507 CG 031 398

AUTHOR Mehrotra, Chandra M.
TITLE Integrating Teaching and Scholarship in Psychology of Aging.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. on Aging (DHHS/NIH), Bethesda, MD.
PUB DATE 2001-08-27
NOTE 17p.; Poster presented at the Annual Conference of the American Psychological Association (109th, San Francisco, CA, August 24-28, 2001).
CONTRACT AG14120
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Aging (Individuals); *College Faculty; Curriculum Development; Educational Innovation; Graduate Study; Higher Education; Methods Courses; Professional Training; Psychology; Research Methodology

ABSTRACT

An advanced training program in research methodology was designed, implemented, and evaluated for psychology faculty from four-year colleges. The goal was to build and sustain a community of college teachers committed to conducting aging research, incorporating methodological developments in psychology courses, and engaging undergraduate students in their research. Program design included an initial 2-week summer institute, ongoing consultation during the academic year, and 2 follow-up meetings that provided participants the opportunity to share their research proposals and obtain feedback from the visiting scholars. To date, 58 psychology teachers have participated in the program. Participants have given high ratings to the program and indicated that they have become more interested in conducting aging research. A follow-up evaluation indicates that a number of participants have incorporated recent methodological developments in their courses and have included students as active participants in their research. (JDM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 458 507

Integrating Teaching and Scholarship In Psychology of Aging

Chandra M. Mehrotra, Ph.D.
The College of St. Scholastica

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

C. MEHROTA

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Poster session presented at the 109th Annual Convention
of the American Psychological Association
San Francisco, California
August 27, 2001

CG031398

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract

With NIA support we have designed, implemented, and evaluated an advanced training program in research methodology for psychology faculty from four-year colleges. The goal of the program is to build and sustain a community of college teachers committed to conducting aging research, incorporating methodological developments in psychology courses, and engaging undergraduate students in their research. Program design includes an initial two-week summer institute, ongoing consultation during the academic year, and two follow-up meetings which provide participants the opportunity to share their research proposals and obtain feedback from the visiting scholars, from the NIA staff, and from each other. To date, fifty-eight psychology teachers have participated in the program. They include a good mix of participants from colleges and universities across the country, as well as an excellent representation of women and minorities. Participants have given consistently high ratings to the program and have indicated that they have become more aware of new developments in research methodology, have learned new ways of thinking about research, and have become more interested in conducting aging research. In addition, they have maintained contact with one another, the visiting professors, and the NIA staff. Of the seventeen participants who have now submitted their grant applications to NIA, nine have received funding to conduct their research, and an additional four have been invited to resubmit their applications after addressing the concerns expressed by NIA reviewers. All of the remaining participants are currently developing their applications. Follow-up evaluation indicates that a number of participants have incorporated recent methodological developments in their courses and have included their students as active participants in their research.

Integrating Teaching and Scholarship in Psychology of Aging

With the support provided by the National Institute on Aging (NIA) we have designed, implemented, and evaluated an advanced training program in research methodology for psychology faculty from four-year colleges across the country. The goal of the program is to build and sustain a community of college teachers committed to conducting aging research, incorporating methodological developments in psychology courses and engaging undergraduate students in aging research. The program is based on premises such as:

- Promoting research among faculty from four-year colleges can make a significant impact not only in terms of their own vitality and productivity, but also in strengthening the knowledge and research skills of students they teach (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995).
- Bringing college faculty in contact with a group of distinguished scholars representing various aspects of aging research can expose them to a variety of role models and methodologies, promote cross-fertilization of ideas, and motivate them to create their own programs of research.
- An effective program promotes active learning. Participants should be engaged in activities such as reading, discussion, computer-based exercises, and proposal development and should be involved in higher-order thinking that encourages analysis, synthesis, and evaluation throughout the program (Meyers & Jones, 1993).
- A one-time program is not sufficient. An effective program design includes ongoing contact with the participants. This follow-through serves to reinforce and extend new learning and adds valuable professional socialization that sustains their continued involvement in the field (Mehrotra, 1996).

Specific aims of the program include: (1) to increase participants knowledge, skills, and motivation for pursuing an ongoing program of aging research; (2) to provide them an opportunity to interact intensively with senior investigators from research universities; (3) to increase their awareness of grant support available for exploring new directions in aging research and provide an opportunity to interact with NIA staff on an ongoing basis; (4) to strengthen their knowledge and skills related to manuscripts for publication and dissemination; and (5) to promote the development of networking relationships among the participants.

As shown in Table 1, program design includes an initial two-week summer institute, ongoing consultation during the academic year, and two follow-up meetings. Institute topics and visiting faculty are presented in Table 2. To date, fifty-eight psychology teachers have participated in the program. They include a good mix of participants from colleges and universities located in different parts of the country, as well as an excellent representation of women and minorities. Of the fifty-eight teachers we have attracted to date, four are Asian Americans, five African Americans, and five Hispanic Americans. Participants' areas of specialization include social psychology, human factors, developmental psychology, experimental psychology, cognitive psychology, counseling psychology, and clinical psychology. Thus there is considerable variety with regard to their area of specialization, their current place of employment, their teaching responsibilities, and the focus of research they plan to undertake.

Program Evaluation

Evaluation Methods

From the very beginning, evaluation has been an integral part of the program in conceptualizing its design, monitoring its implementation, and assessing its impact upon the participants (Patton, 1997; Posavac & Carey, 1997). Evaluation efforts have focused on examining the effectiveness of the program in reaching the target population, monitoring the implementation of all aspects of the program, ascertaining participants reactions to program design, its content, and instructional quality, assessing program's contribution in stimulating them to incorporate new content in their courses and involving students in aging research, and tracking their progress in preparing and submitting their grant applications to NIA. Evaluation methods include review of application materials, observation of program sessions and follow-up meetings, analysis of evaluation surveys, examination of completed grant applications, and analysis of reviewers' comments.

Table 1

Program Design

	Summer 1998	1998-99	Summer 1999	1999-2000	Summer 2000	2000-01	Summer 2001	2001-02	Summer 2002
Cohort 1	Initial Institute	February Meeting Ongoing Consultation	Follow-up Institute ↑ ↓	---	---	---	---	---	---
Cohort 2			Initial Institute	February Meeting Ongoing Consultation	Follow-up Institute ↑ ↓	---	---	---	---
Cohort 3					Initial Institute	February Meeting Ongoing Consultation	Follow-up Institute ↑ ↓	---	---
Cohort 4							Initial Institute	February Meeting Ongoing Consultation	Follow-up Institute

Table 2

Program Outline

Topic	Faculty	Institutional Affiliation
	Initial Institute	
Research Design and Analysis	K. Warner Schaie	Pennsylvania State University
Field Studies	Neil Charness	Florida State University
Ethnicity and Aging	Keith Whitfield	Pennsylvania State University
Social Psychology and Aging	Fredda Blanchard Fields	Georgia Institute of Technology
Cognition and Aging	Timothy Salthouse	University of Virginia
Seeking Grant Support	Robin Barr Daniel Berch	National Institute on Aging National Institute on Aging
Conducting Research in Small Colleges	Chandra Mehrotra	The College of St. Scholastica
	Intervening Academic Year *February Meeting and Ongoing Consultation*	
	Follow-up Institute	
Dissemination and Publication	Fredda Blanchard-Fields	George Institute of Technology
Presentations by Participants	Chandra Mehrotra Robin Barr Keith Whitfield	The College of St. Scholastica National Institute on Aging Pennsylvania State University

Table 3

Overall Ratings of the Initial Institute

	1998 Institute	1999 Institute	2000 Institute	2001 Institute
N	15	15	15	13
Mean	3.86*	3.75	3.80	4.00
SD	0.36	0.62	0.41	0.00

*All ratings in this paper are reported on a four-point scale where 1= poor and 4= excellent.

Key Findings

Participants have given consistently high ratings to the program as a whole (Table 3). They have indicated the program has improved their knowledge and skills related to research methodology, has created new enthusiasm to conduct research on aging, and has increased their awareness of grant support available from NIA (Table 4). In addition, it has allowed them to interact intensely with each other, with the visiting professors, and with the NIA staff. As of August 2001, seventeen participants have submitted their research proposals to NIA and the remaining participants are in the process of developing their grant applications. Table 5 presents the topics of research proposals participants have submitted to date. Topics of proposals currently under development can be found at the program website (www.css.edu/depts/grad/nia). Since we have presented detailed evaluation findings in another paper (Mehrotra, 1999), the following discussion focuses on examining program's effectiveness in promoting the integration of teaching and scholarship in psychology of aging.

Student Impact. After participating in the program for about a year, the teachers were asked to report the extent to which they (a) have incorporated new content in their courses and (b) have involved students in research on aging. Analysis of their responses indicates that more than eighty-eight percent of the participants have incorporated new content in their courses. The new content includes methodological issues, aging and diversity, attitudes toward older adults, evaluation designs, and information sources for grants. Many participants have started using material from the program sessions in the courses they teach and some of them have designed new courses or added an aging dimension in the courses they teach. In addition to incorporating new content into their courses, more than seventy-five percent of the respondents have begun to involve their undergraduate students in research on aging. Given below are examples of participants' responses focusing on student involvement in research:

Table 4

In What Ways Have the Participants Benefited from the Initial Institute?

Areas	1998 Institute		1999 Institute		2000 Institute		2001 Institute	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1. Learned new ways to collect, analyze, and use data	3.27	0.80	3.50	0.65	3.27	0.59	3.31	0.63
2. Became more aware of new developments	3.33	0.72	3.36	0.63	3.13	0.64	3.54	0.78
3. Became more interested in conducting applied research	3.40	0.74	3.08	1.04	3.93	0.26	3.46	0.66
4. Became more aware of grant support available from the NIA	4.00	0.00	4.00	0.00	3.93	0.36	3.85	0.38

- I have an honors student doing a project on working memory and aging.
- My commitment and enthusiasm to developing a research program has been helpful in engaging my students in aging issues.
- I have provided students with more productive and stimulating research opportunities.
- I have thought of more ways to involve students in research besides data collection.
- I have expanded the number of students I involve in research.
- Two of my student research groups presented posters at our first undergraduate research symposium.
- I now submit papers to conferences that I never would have attended before; I bring my students with me.
- My enthusiasm for research has increased; my lab now devotes eighty percent of its resources to aging research.

In short, as a result of their participation in the program a large number of psychology teachers from four-year colleges have strengthened their courses by including new content and advances in research methodology and have involved undergraduate students in aging research. Increase in participants' attendance at national conferences may also be viewed as an indication of the program's effectiveness in enhancing their interest in aging research, reducing academic isolation, and creating a community of learners.

Research Proposals. As noted earlier, to date seventeen participants have developed their proposals to conduct research in psychology of aging and have submitted them to request NIA funding. Table 5 presents the project titles and institutional affiliations of seventeen participants who have submitted their grant applications to NIA. Of these seventeen grant applications, the first four have already been funded and projects 5 through 9 have received scores in the funding range. In addition, four of the applicants have been encouraged to resubmit their research proposal after addressing the concerns expressed by the NIA reviewers. In reviewing Table 5, it should also be noted that (a) eight of the nine successful applications were submitted by psychology teachers from institutions that emphasize teaching rather than research; (b) four of the nine applications focus on aging and diversity – a topic of considerable interest given the continuing increase in the number of minority elders in the United States; (c) three of the applications were submitted to request 3-year support from the Academic Research

Table 5

Grant Applications Submitted by Past Participants

Participant	Institutional Affiliation	Project Title
#1 *	Black Hills State University Spearfish, SD	The effects of filial piety on ageism in Lakota Culture
#2	Penn State Fayette Campus Union Town, PA	Immigrant Elderly: The Experience of Asian Indians in America
#3	Barry University Miami Shores, FL	Evaluating perceived quality of advice given by older women to middle-aged daughters
#4	Brandeis University Waltham, MA	Social control and well-being in older adults
#5	California Polytechnic & State University San Luis Obispo, CA	Adult aging and the speed of word recognition processes
#6	California State University San Marcos, CA	Caring for elderly with Alzheimer's disease: Impact on the young
#7	California State University Chico, CA	Self, health, and life satisfaction in Mexican Americans
#8	Oklahoma State University Stillwater, OK	Psychomotivational determinants of retirement planning
#9	University of Nevada Reno, NV	Writing and health in older adults
#10	Rockford College Rockford, IL	Using Examples to Discuss Successful Adaptation to Growing Older
#11	University of Bridgeport Bridgeport, CT	The Relationship of the Experiences of Racism and Homoprejudice in Older African Gay Men to Self Esteem, Life Satisfaction and General Mental Health
#12	University of Montevallo Montevallo, AL	Understanding Mental Models as Tools for Older Adults
#13	Wesleyan University Middletown, CT	Mechanisms of False Memory in Young and Older Adults
#14	St. Mary's College Moraga, CA	Health and Social Support Among Low Income Elders
#15	St. Augestine's College Raleigh, NC	Academic Research Enhancement Award
#16	University of Wisconsin-Platteville Platteville, WI	Social Support, Personality and Health of Asian Indian Immigrants
#17	University of San Francisco San Francisco, CA	Stereotypes of the Elderly in Age-segregated Living Situations

* Projects for participants 1-9 have received scores in the funding range from the National Institute on Aging.

Enhancement Award (AREA) program which aims to promote student engagement in research at teaching-oriented institutions.

Although only three of the applicants have explicitly stated student participation as a program outcome, informal discussions indicate that almost all of them plan to have an important role for undergraduate students. Furthermore, since five of the applicants have requested one-year NIA support for pilot studies using the R03 funding mechanism, it is likely that these studies would lead to the development of a major research effort under the R01 mechanism. If this expectation is met, it will provide additional opportunities for engaging undergraduate students in aging research over a three to five year project period. This research training and laboratory experience would stimulate participating students to pursue graduate training in aging and increase their likelihood of getting admitted into a strong graduate program. Thus, the research training program has not only made an impact on participants' vitality and productivity but has also provided valuable learning experiences to their students. These experiences have been instrumental in strengthening the knowledge and research skills of the participating students and motivating them to pursue graduate studies in psychology of aging.

Conclusion

In collaboration with NIA staff and distinguished scholars, we have designed a year-long research training program in aging for psychology teachers from across the country. This program is based on the premise that promoting research among faculty from four-year colleges can make a significant impact not only in terms of their own vitality and productivity, but also in strengthening the knowledge and research skills of their students. In addition, we believe that teachers involved in aging research serve as excellent role models for their students, stimulating them to consider pursuing their own research careers. To date, seventeen participants have developed their research proposals and have submitted them to the National Institute on Aging, four have received NIA funding and an additional five have received scores in the funding range. All of the remaining participants are in the process of developing their grant applications. Participants consistently report that they have strengthened their courses by including state-of-the-art research methods and content related to aging. Many of them have involved students in their research and have encouraged them to give presentations at undergraduate research conferences.

Based on our experience with this program during the past four years we would like to share the following observations with colleagues interested in designing similar programs in other areas of psychology:

- Given the academic isolation experienced by many faculty, it is essential to provide them with opportunities for ongoing contact with colleagues from other institutions and with distinguished scholars.
- Participants appreciate personalized consultation they receive from the visiting scholars.
- Having the goal of preparing and submitting a grant application provides a task orientation to the program as a whole.
- Participants benefit from the feedback they receive from the visiting scholars, from the NIA staff, and from each other.
- Informal interactions are as useful as formal presentations. Having both the participants and the visiting scholars stay on campus offers continuing opportunities for interactions and creates a community of learners.
- Follow-up meetings reinforce and extend new learning and add valuable professional socialization that sustains their continuing involvement in aging research.
- Continuing support at the home institution is critical. Without such support, participants would not be able to design and implement a new program of research.

In short, the program has achieved considerable success in stimulating aging research in teaching-oriented institutions, thereby providing undergraduate students with extended opportunities to obtain valuable research experience, to develop research-related knowledge and skills, and to consider undertaking graduate study in adult development and aging. Similar programs may be developed to promote integration of teaching and scholarship in other areas of psychology.

References

Blackburn, R.T., & Lawrence, J.H. (1995). Faculty at Work: Motivation, Expectation, and Satisfaction. Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press.

Mehrotra, C.M. (1996). Enhancing undergraduate education in psychology of aging through faculty development. Educational Gerontology, 22, 1-7.

Mehrotra, C.M. (1999). Evaluation of a training program to increase faculty productivity in aging research. Poster session presented at the 52nd annual scientific meeting of the Gerontological Society of America, San Francisco, CA.

Meyers, C., & Jones, T.B. (1993). Promoting Active Learning: Strategies for the college classroom. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Patton, M.Q. (1997). Utilization-focused evaluation. (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Posavac, E., & Carey, R. (1997). Program evaluation: Methods and case studies. (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Author Note

Chandra M. Mehrotra, Department of Psychology, The College of St. Scholastica.

Support for the program and for preparation of this paper was provided by Grant AG14120 from the National Institute on Aging, National Institutes of Health.

Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to Chandra M. Mehrotra, The College of St. Scholastica, 1200 Kenwood Avenue, Duluth, Minnesota 55811-4199. E-mail: cmehrotr@css.edu.